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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MONTREAL 001063

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WHA/CAN (ERVITI)

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TAGS: [CA](#) [CASC](#) [CMGT](#) [CPAS](#) [ECON](#) [KPAO](#) [PREL](#) [KTRD](#)

SUBJECT: SNAPSHOT OF A BORDER COMMUNITY: MONTREAL WHTI  
OUTREACH

Classified By: CG Mary B Marshall for reasons 1.4b/d

**¶11.** (SBU) Recently, as part of an ongoing WHTI outreach program, Consul General Montreal and Econoff visited small towns along the Quebec/US border to view how integrated the border communities are, and discuss the impact of WHTI. An example of completely integrated towns is the Stanstead, Quebec and Derby Line, Vermont dynamic. The discussions with border officials, school principals, mayors, police, media representatives, and the business community offered insights into community concerns over WHTI, the challenges posed by unmanned border crossings to border security, and the scope of US-Canadian law enforcement cooperation at the border. This visit occurred before Congress passed legislation amending WHTI requirements and allowing a delay up to June 1, 2009 if the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State are not ready to implement the program sooner.

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Cross-border field trips and hockey practice  
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**¶12.** (SBU) Community life on both sides of the border is closely integrated. On the south side of the border, the communities are close-knit, but are economically depressed. The Derby Line area itself is a Federally-designated poverty area. The Derby Line Elementary school, which has 50% of its students on a free or reduced-cost lunch program, is considered one of the wealthier school districts in the area (where some other schools have up to 80% of their students on such lunch programs). The 400 students at Derby Elementary school routinely take field trips across the border to destinations in Quebec Province, such as the Granby zoo and Montreal's Biodome and museums. Just as public schools have to finance instruments for economically disadvantaged students in order to offer a music program, Derby Elementary would have to foot the bill for passport cards for students whose parents could not afford the travel document. According to the school's principal, a passport (or passport card) requirement for students crossing the border would force the school to cancel all such trips. "We can't exclude five kids from a field trip for sixty because they can't pay," the principal explained, adding that their budget wouldn't cover paying for those students unable to afford the card. The exception granted for school groups in the recent legislation is a welcome reprieve for the schools along the border.

**¶13.** (SBU) Border crossings in Derby Line/Stanstead have never involved much fanfare, but are rather a routine part of life in the area. Students from Derby Line have their "home" hockey court in Quebec, and cross the border four or five times a week to compete in games and to attend practice. Children from Stanstead play basketball at the Derby Line

community center. Girls from Derby Line high schools rush to the local mall in Sherbrooke, Quebec to buy prom dresses. Fifth graders from Derby go swimming at Stanstead College facilities. Children cross the border every day just to play with their friends who happen to live on the other side of the border.

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Unmanned crossings and border security  
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¶4. (C/NF) Stanstead has long held the dubious legacy of serving as a hotbed for smugglers, especially during the prohibition years; local urban folklore is replete with tales of whisky being piped across the border in garden hoses. Even today, the existence of three unmanned border crossings in the area lends itself to smuggling and other illegal activities, though, according to law enforcement agents at the border, today's smuggling now tends to involve drugs and human trafficking rings. With two manned border crossings within 700 meters of one another, many have questioned the need for these three additional unmanned crossings in the vicinity. These unmanned border crossings are located on residential roads, and are marked with only a sign stating that individuals crossing must report to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Although it is not illegal to cross the border at an unmanned entrance, it is illegal to do so without reporting to CBP after entering. An example traditionally cited in books and travel articles on Canada and the U.S. is the Haskell Library and Opera House -- the only library with its front door in the United States and its books in Canada, with the border running right down the center of its reading room, and the audience in the U.S. and the stage in Canada upstairs in the opera house. In Beebe

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Plain, Vermont, one side of the street has houses in the U.S., while the other side is in Canada, creating an awkward CBP reporting requirement for those wishing to visit their neighbors.

¶5. (C/NF) Monitors in the U.S. CBP station view each unmanned crossing. If border officials see a car that passes through the crossing and does not report to CBP, they send a car out to pursue the vehicle. Tourists unfamiliar with the area have been known to end up crossing the border inadvertently, and then have to explain themselves to the CBP officer. The CBP officers can read the license number and get the make of the car during the day, but at night the unmanned crossings become significantly more difficult to control. At night they might only see two headlights approaching, making it difficult (if not impossible) to track down cars that do not report to CBP. Cars crossing into Canada at these unmanned ports, are "not well-monitored," according to one Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer in Derby Line.

¶6. (C/NF) Until this summer, U.S. and Canadian citizens sometimes passed through the border in Derby Line without even a photo I.D. That changed in June 2006, when U.S. border officials began to require a photo ID of all those entering the U.S. Although border officials expected resistance to the new procedures, they found that people "soon fell in line" with the requirement, and by August, "everyone had one."

¶7. (C/NF) The Integrated Border Enforcement Team (IBET) located in Stanstead includes law enforcement officials from both sides of the border (provincial and state police, municipal police, and federal police, as well as border officials) and meets regularly to address issues of mutual importance, analyzing intelligence, identifying trends, and developing ways to work together to solve problems at the border. Although the head of the IBET team in Stanstead acknowledged that most of the intelligence they have received thus far has dealt with drug smuggling, the team hopes that

one day the informants will also pass on information relating to more serious security/terrorist threats.

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Shared cross-border emergency services  
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¶ 18. (SBU) Towns close to the U.S.-Canadian border in the Derby Line area frequently have mutual aid agreements between emergency services providers, and many residents worry about the impact of a passport or passport-card requirement at the border on the ability to cross the border in an emergency. The chief of the Stanstead fire department told us that the situation of emergency services providers crossing the border is further complicated by the fact that not all firefighters proceed to the scene of a fire in a fire truck. Frequently, volunteer fire fighters will follow in their personal cars if they are unable to make it to the station in time to go on the fire truck. These border communities also tend to share snow removal services and even their water supply.

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Economic impacts  
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¶ 19. (SBU) According to U.S. border officials, many Canadians cross the border in Derby Line in order to fill up their tanks with cheaper U.S. gas. But the gas stations in Vermont are not the only institutions to benefit from Canadian visitor dollars. Jay Peak, a popular ski resort in Northern Vermont, has a sizable percentage of its clientele from Canada, and advertises aggressively in Montreal. Tourist businesses, such as Jay Peak and restaurants, worry they will suffer a real economic impact if potential customers are scared off by the requirement of a passport/passport card. Many of the export business contacts with whom we have spoken, most of which do 90% or more of their business south of the border, note that potential exporters will do "whatever it takes" to remain in compliance with U.S. border regulations in order to have continued access to the U.S. market. But although large companies have significant economic resources to devote to staying abreast of new border crossing requirements and programs such as C-TPAT, small and medium-sized enterprises have significantly less financial margin for absorbing costs and making errors, and less manpower to devote to border regulations. Companies in Quebec, large and small, have a strong interest in maintaining their access to the U.S. market, and request both more information about the Western Hemisphere Travel

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Initiative and on programs such as C-TPAT.

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Comment  
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¶ 10. (SBU) We are planning more trips along the border and to follow-up with our contacts to emphasize the timeline and certification requirements recently enacted by the U.S. Congress only delay, but do not dismiss, the requirements for secure documentation at the border. The comments made by our interlocutors during this trip have echoed those made during the public comment period at meetings in Plattsburgh, NY and Burlington, VT.  
MARSHALL